



Maricopa County Animal Care & Control *Avoiding Dog Bites*



Every year, dogs bite more than four million people in the United States. Most of the victims are children under the age of 13. The good news is that dog bites are preventable. Exercising caution when approaching dogs, teaching your children how to safely interact with canines and responsible pet ownership are the keys to dog bite prevention.

Dogs bite for many reasons. Some snap out of fear. Some may bite if they are in pain. Because dog bites occur for a variety of reasons, you should always observe certain precautions when interacting with dogs.

Never approach a strange dog, especially one who's tied or confined behind a fence or in a car.

Don't pet a dog- even your own - without letting him see and sniff you first.

Never turn your back to a dog and run away. A dog's natural instinct will be to chase and catch you.

Don't disturb a dog while she's sleeping, eating, chewing on a toy, or caring for puppies. Be cautious around strange dogs. Always assume that a dog who doesn't know you may see you as an intruder or a threat.

If you are approached by a dog who is acting aggressively, follow these steps:

Never scream and run.

Remain motionless, hands at your sides, and avoid eye contact with the dog. Once the dog loses interest in you, slowly back away until he is out of sight. If the dog does attack, "feed" him your jacket, purse, bicycle, or anything that you can put between yourself and the dog. If you fall or are knocked to the ground, curl into a ball with your hands over your ears and remain motionless. Try not to scream or roll around.

Dog Safety for Children

The same principles for avoiding dog bites apply to children. Just as we teach our children to practice safety in other situations, we can teach them to be safe around dogs. The most important lessons for children to learn are not to chase or tease dogs they know and to avoid dogs they don't know. Call Maricopa County Animal Care and Control for a copy of our children's activity book that offers bite prevention tips geared toward kids.

If you or someone you know are bitten or attacked by a dog, try not to panic. If you witness a vicious attack call 911 immediately. If the bite is not severe, follow the steps outlined as follows:

For more information on animal care, behavior or AC&C programs,
contact (602) 506-PETS or visit pets.maricopa.gov

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*(this page excerpted from
What To Do If You Are Bitten By A Dog)*

1. Immediately wash the wound thoroughly with soap and warm water.
2. Call a doctor or hospital for medical aid.

3. Report the bite to Maricopa County Animal Care and Control by calling (602) 506-7387. Tell the AC&C call center clerk everything you know about the dog, how and when you were bitten, how severely you were bitten or how severely the victim was bitten, the owner's name and the address where the dog lives. If the dog is a stray, tell the clerk what the dog looks like, where you last saw the dog, whether you've seen the dog before, and in which direction it went.

All dogs that have bitten are required by law to be quarantined for ten days. The place of quarantine depends on a number of factors including if the dog has a current rabies vaccination, is licensed and the severity of the bite. Dogs that were not leashed at the time of the bite, do not have a Maricopa County dog license or a current rabies vaccination are usually quarantined at the animal control facility or a veterinarian's office.

AC&C only holds the dog for rabies observation purposes. Dogs that are under quarantine are monitored for rabies. If the dog has rabies, the dog will manifest signs of the disease within ten days. The dog is not

held for being vicious. If a vicious dog petition is not filed within ten days, the owner will have the opportunity to get their dog back.

If the victim feels that the dog is a real threat, he/she has the responsibility to file a vicious dog petition with their city or justice court. A judge will hold a hearing to determine if the dog is vicious. Both the victim and the dog owner will have an opportunity to present their case at the hearing.

The judge will then make a determination as to whether the dog is vicious or not. The judge has many options. For example, he/she can take no action, release the dog with restrictions (e.g, the dog will need to be neutered or wear a muzzle in public) or the judge can order that the dog be euthanized. The court can advise you on what options are available or will listen to your suggestions.

It is the job of AC&C to house the dog until the court orders that the dog be released or euthanized. If the court orders the dog's release, the owner is responsible for paying all AC&C's fees for housing and caring for the dog. A vicious dog petition can be filed even if the dog is quarantined outside the AC&C facility.